

REMARKS

Reconsideration of this application, as amended, is requested.

Claims 2-7 remain in the application. Independent claim 2 has been amended to define the invention more clearly. Dependent claim 3 has been amended slightly to conform to amended claim 2. Dependent claim 6 has been amended to correct a clerical mistake. Claim 1 was canceled earlier in the prosecution. Non-elected claims 8 and 9 have been canceled without prejudice.

The applicants and the assignee were pleased to note that claims 4-7 were identified in the Office Action as being allowed. Counsel spoke briefly to the Examiner by telephone on February 29, 2008. The Examiner acknowledges that he did not realize allowable claim 6 depended from claim 2. The Examiner indicated that a combination of previously presented claim 2 and claim 6 would not distinguish over the prior art. Counsel then referred to an earlier telephone conversation with the Examiner. In the earlier conversation, the Examiner indicated that claim 2 would distinguish over the prior art if amended to recite a plurality of expander members, with each of the expander members being connected with a tube ring. The Examiner indicated during the telephone conversation on February 29, 2008 that the prior art did not suggest a plurality of expander members, with each of the expander members being connected with a tube ring.

Claim 2 has been amended to incorporate the previously discussed limitation of a plurality of expander members, each of which is connected with a tube ring. It is believed that amended independent claim 2 is patentable over all of the prior art. Claims 3 and 6 depend from claim 2 and should be allowed as well.

Claims 4, 5 and 7 have been allowed. Those claims remain in the application and have not been amended further.

In view of the preceding amendments and remarks, it is submitted that all of the claims remaining in the application are directed to patentable subject matter, and allowance is solicited. The Examiner is urged to contact applicants attorney at the number below to expedite the prosecution of this application.

Respectfully submitted,



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